

Message Text

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UNCLAS HELSINKI 327

E.O. 11152: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, FI

SUBJECT: POLICE STRIKE FAILS TO RUFFLE FINNS

REF: HELSINKI 210

1. THE TRADITIONAL LABOR UNREST SURROUNDING THE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACTS IS HIGHLIGHTED THIS YEAR BY A STRIKE OF FINLAND'S POLICEMEN'S UNION. DESPITE A NUMBER OF OTHER BRIEF STRIKES - NOT ALL RELATED TO CONTRACT ISSUES - THIS YEAR'S LABOR STRIFE IS MILD IN COMPARISON WITH MOST YEARS. THE ECONOMIC RECESSION, RATHER THAN STISFACTION WITH THE PATTERN-SETTING INCOMES POLICY SETTLEMENT (REFTEL), IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS "MODERATION."

2. THE POLICE STRIKE, WHICH BEGAN FEBRUARY 13, INVOLVES ABOUT 6,000 EMPLOYEES NATIONWIDE. POLICE SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL, THE CRIMINAL POLICE, AND THE SECURITY POLICE ARE NOT INVOLVED. THE POLICEMEN ARE DEMANDING WAGE INCREASES OF ABOUT 50 PERCENT, CITING AS JUSTIFICATION DECREASE IN THEIR RELATIVE WAGES IN RECENT YEARS. STRIKE HAS BEEN DECLARED ILLEGAL BY LABOR COURT AND IS NOT SUPPORTED BY FINNISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (SAK) OR THE FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (VTY) TO WHICH UNCLASSIFIED

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POLICEMEN BELONG AND WHICH HAS ALREADY SIGNED CONTRACT.

NATION HAS TAKEN STRIKE IN STRIDE, THERE HAS BEEN NO INCREASE IN VIOLENCE AND NEWSPAPERS HAVE FACETIOUSLY ASKED "DO WE NEED THE POLICE?" STRIKE HAS CAUSED CONCERN IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES, HOWEVER, AND IF MEDIATION ATTEMPTS ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, PARLIAMENT MAY PASS LAW FORCING POLICEMEN BACK TO WORK.

3. IN ADDITION TO POLICE STRIKE THERE HAVE BEEN ONE-DAY STRIKES BY METALWORKERS, ELECTRICIANS, BANK CLERKS, TEACHERS RAILROAD AND AIRLINE EMPLOYEES. MOST OF THESE HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO SPEED UP CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, AND WITH ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST MAJOR INDUSTRIAL CONTRACTS FEBRUARY 18 (METALWORKERS AND CHEMICALWORKERS) MOST OTHER GROUPS ARE QUICKLY EXPECTED TO FALL INTO LINE. NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (WITH THE ONE NOTABLE EXCEPTION) HAVE ALREADY AGREED TO TERMS. SOME DISTURBANCES ARE STILL THREATENED (E.G. ICEBREAKER RADIO OPERATORS) BUT ARE UNLIKELY TO CAUSE MAJOR OR PROLONGED DISRUPTION.
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